

The Kitt Peak Virtual Tour

Kitt Peak National Observatory

Tohono O'odham

Kitt Peak National Observatory Menu

History
Home Page
Panorama
Photo Album
Science Highlights
Tohono O'odham
Web Resources
Why Research Astronomy?

The name for Kitt Peak in the O'odham language is "Ioligam," meaning manzanita.

The Tohono O'odham Reservation, consisting of four separated lands, is the second largest reservation in the United States.

For many years, [Elizabeth Estrada](#) would collect Indian baskets created by members of the Tohono O'odham tribe and deliver them to the mountain top for sale to visitors to Kitt Peak.

In the story of creation as told by the Tohono O'odham, the reproductive powers of the universe give birth to the world thanks to I'toi, the god who lives in Waw kiwalik, or Baboquivari Peak.

Kitt Peak is located on the Tohono O'odham Reservation, stretching 90 miles across the Sonoran Desert southwest of Tucson. This has been the ancestral homeland of the Tohono O'odham Nation for over 2,000 years.

Tohono O'odham means "Desert People" in the O'odham language, and many Native Americans refer to themselves as "the People" in their own language.

To the O'odham Nation, Kitt Peak is a sacred mountain although not as sacred as [Baboquivari Peak](#), the large granite dome found to the south. The O'odham regard Baboquivari to be the navel of the world, the opening in the Earth from which they emerged after the world flood.

When the tribal council of the Tohono O'odham Nation was first approached with the plan to build an observatory on their sacred mountain, they refused. However, a solution was achieved.

Like many Native Americans, the Tohono O'odham have a significant relationship with the stars because they figure prominently in their religions and ancient stories. The astronomers invited the tribal council to visit [Steward Observatory](#) at the [University of Arizona](#) and observe the stars through the 36-inch telescope. The impressed tribal council granted

permission for the observatory to be built on the mountain and remain "as long as only astronomy research was conducted."

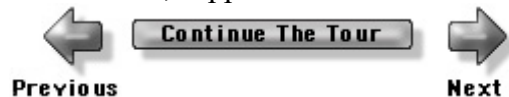


The meeting of the Schuk Toak district council with AURA representatives on March 5th, 1958, authorizing the lease of Kitt Peak to the National Science Foundation.



Hand Woven Tohono O'odham Baskets

In a [signed agreement](#), the O'odham Nation received a variety of concessions. Kitt Peak National Observatory continues to benefit the Tohono O'odham nation today. The top 200 acres of the mountain are leased by the [National Science Foundation](#) and all electricity is purchased from the tribal utility authority. The observatory provides many jobs, and sales of arts and crafts in the [Kitt Peak National Observatory Visitor Center](#), such as the baskets shown here, support O'odham traditional culture.



[[Home](#)] [[Tour Itinerary](#)] [[Clickable Map](#)] [[Aerial View](#)] [[Web Resources](#)]

[NOAO](#) is operated by the [Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy \(AURA\), Inc.](#) under cooperative agreement with the [National Science Foundation](#). The Kitt Peak Virtual Tour is developed and maintained by the [NOAO Educational Outreach Office](#).

Copyright © 1999 The Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, Inc. All Rights Reserved.